

# Safety Investigators

Safety Investigators (SIs) are at the center of how the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) carries out its mission. By investigating high-risk carriers and enforcing compliance with agency safety regulations, SIs have a real impact on the reduction of commercial motor vehicle (CMV) crash rates in the United States. The introduction of Compliance, Safety, Accountability (CSA) has resulted in some changes for FMCSA's enforcement and compliance program. However, while the measurement system and investigative process have been modified somewhat, the foundation of an SI's job has not changed.

## SIs previously:

## The SI of today:

## The benefits:

	Conducted compliance reviews (CRs) for all aspects of a high-risk carrier's operation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducts Onsite Comprehensive Investigations for all aspects of a high-risk carrier's operation.</li> <li>Conducts Onsite Focused Investigations targeted to specific safety problems when warranted by the safety performance data.</li> </ul>	<p>Onsite Comprehensive Investigations allow an SI to fully investigate the highest risk carriers, similar to today's CR.</p> <p>Onsite Focused Investigations are efficient, allowing an SI to target their investigations to address specific safety problems.</p>
	Conducted CR at a carrier's place of business.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducts some investigations at a carrier's place of business.</li> <li>Conducts some investigations from the office (these are called Offsite Investigations and are used for carriers with less severe safety problems).</li> </ul>	Offsite Investigations reduce travel and allow an SI to contact and influence more carriers. Using Offsite Investigations, an SI will have multiple cases open at one time (i.e. conduct an investigation while waiting for records from another). Offsite Investigations are neither clerical in nature nor "soft" and can lead to a Notice of Claim.
	Cited violations discovered during CR and assessed fines where appropriate.	Cites violations and identifies root causes of safety problems discovered during investigations, suggests remedies for deficiencies, and assesses fines where appropriate.	Determining the root causes and remedies to fix poor safety performance in a carrier minimizes the risk of recurring problems and enhances the impact of an SI's work.
	Conducted one CR at a time from start through completion.	Manages multiple investigations at a time that are in different stages of completion (about five open at once).	Expands an SI's safety impact, allowing an SI to contact and influence more carriers with safety problems and to correct problems before they lead to crashes.
	Enforced regulations through CRs and financial penalties.	Enforces regulations through investigations and financial penalties.	Enforcement remains a priority for the agency.
	Used and understood SafeStat scores and methodology to identify carriers with unsafe behaviors to be reviewed.	Uses and understands the Safety Measurement System (SMS) to identify carriers with unsafe behaviors to be reviewed.	SMS assigns safety scores in 7 Behavior Analysis and Safety Improvement Categories (BASICS) that are directly linked to crash risk. Translating violations to the 7 areas is logical and easy to understand and to explain to carriers.

CSA is an FMCSA enforcement and compliance program to improve large truck and bus safety and ultimately reduce CMV-related crashes, injuries, and fatalities. For more information about CSA, visit <http://csa.fmcsa.dot.gov>



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## Frequently Asked Questions About Safety Investigators' Jobs

SIs who investigate and enforce carrier compliance are dedicated and well-trained, and their work facilitates the reduction of CMV crash rates throughout the country. It is only natural that a major change to the agency's business processes will impact FMCSA's enforcement and compliance program, which will raise some questions. Some frequently asked questions are answered here.

### **Q. How does CSA impact an SI's job?**

**A.** An SI's job still focuses on enforcement and compliance and the foundation of an SI's job does not change though the investigative process itself has been modified. Some new skills and competencies are now needed, and some existing skills and competencies have to be refreshed, but these are all within the realm of an SI's role as an enforcement professional.

Enhanced competencies include:

- Case management: managing multiple (about five) open cases at a time
- Investigative/information gathering: discovering new ways to identify breakdowns in carriers' business operations and remedies to mitigate "repeat offenders"
- Education: providing information to carriers on safety and compliance to mitigate "repeat offenders"
- Report writing: documenting safety violations (what is wrong) as well as the root causes (why problems exist) and remedies (how they can be fixed)
- Analysis/computer skills: understanding and using the new measurement system and associated investigative and analytical tools

### **Q. Do SIs get training on the new investigative process and associated skills?**

**A.** Yes. FMCSA provides all Federal employees and State Partners with training on CSA. The training focuses on the new processes (including the updated eFOTM) as well as some of the new skills and competencies described above.

### **Q. Do SIs have to reapply for their jobs?**

**A.** No. Human Resources updates position descriptions as necessary, but current investigators do not have to re-apply for their jobs. In fact, the big changes are more "day-to-day" process changes that do not have a

significant impact on the higher-level document (position description). Investigators' grades do not change.

### **Q. Some SIs have heard that new vacancy announcements are being created. Why are vacancy announcements being created if SIs don't have to re-apply?**

**A.** Vacancy announcements are being created in anticipation of future hires. FMCSA wants to ensure that announcements accurately reflect the new skills/competencies, processes, and expectations of CSA as vacancies are identified in the future.

### **Q. With focused investigations, is it still necessary for SIs to understand all of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSR)?**

**A.** Yes, understanding and applying all of the regulations continues to be a vital part of an SI's job. An Onsite Focused Investigation can occur on any of the 7 BASICs and therefore an SI needs to know all of the regulations. Also, SIs still conduct Onsite Comprehensive Investigations that, similar to compliance reviews, encompass a carrier's entire operations. The agency continues to issue NOCs, so SIs must also know the regulations for that purpose.

### **Q. Does the new measurement system replace an SI's skills as an investigator?**

**A.** No. SIs maintain and enhance their investigative skills by delving into the operations of a carrier. The measurement system offers guidance into what type of investigation should be conducted, but the investigation itself and follow-on decisions about its scope, enforcement, and other follow-on actions are up to investigators and their managers, as they are the experts. No measurement system can replace an SI's experience and expertise as to carrier behavior, history of contacts and problems, local or regional conditions and issues, etc. SIs continue to be responsible for the investigations, whether Onsite or Offsite, that lead to Notices of Violation, Notices of Claim, Operations Out-of-Service Orders, guidance for carriers, and other follow-on actions expected to result in safer carrier operations.

